

Retinal Imaging for Diabetic Retinopathy (FY02-2108)

Impact

Linking a retinal screening to a primary care clinic visit increased the number of diabetics screened for diabetic retinopathy from 65% to 80%. Among active duty Soldiers, the number screened rose by 32%.

Description

The early detection and treatment of diabetic retinopathy can save vision, reduce the cost of eye care, and decrease disability for this chronic disease. Studies have shown that high resolution digital retinal images can be used to render diagnostic and management decisions for patients with diabetes mellitus. In addition, these images are less costly and less time-consuming than an ocular examination by an ophthalmologist. The goal of this initiative was to increase the number of diabetic patients screened for diabetic retinopathy by putting a retinal imaging station in the primary care clinic.

Outcomes

Data was gathered from February 2002 to January 2003 among a population of approximately 4200 diabetics. Linking retinal screening to a primary care appointment resulted in a significant increase in the number of patients screened for diabetic retinopathy. Active duty Soldiers particularly benefited from the program, with a 32% increase in retinal screenings. Patients indicated that this program was faster than seeing an ophthalmologist.

Innovative Features

This initiative linked vision screening for diabetics to a regular diabetes care appointment. The screening was intended to be provided right in the Primary Care Clinic. The added convenience of linking appointments increased the number of patients who received a screening.

Lesson Learned

- An important part of this initiative's plan was to place a retinal screening station in the primary care clinic. Unfortunately, the clinic was unable to accommodate the request for space. However, an important lesson learned was that by simply linking the clinic appointment to the screening appointment increased the number of screenings.
- In addition, patients indicated that this program was faster than seeing an ophthalmologist and thus may be more motivated to keep the next screening appointment.